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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE [illegible] SANFRE
BT
UNCLAS STATE 038104

E.O. 12065: N/A

TAGS: CASC, (SULLIVAN, JOHN J., JR.)

SUBJECT:DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN J. SULLIVAN, JR.

AS PROMISED IN MY JANUARY 27 LETTER, FOLLOWING IS PROPOSED TEXT OF LETTER TO CONGRESSWOMAN ROUKEMA REGARDING DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN SULLIVAN FOR YOUR CLEARANCE.

BEGIN TEXT: DEAR MRS. ROUKEMA:

1. THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER TO ME OF JANUARY 11, AND YOUR LETTER TO THE SECRETARY DATED JANUARY 15, BOTH REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN J. SULLIVAN, JR.

2. FIRST LET ME SAY THAT I WELCOMED THE CHANCE TO MEET WITH YOU AND THE SULLIVAN FAMILY ONCE AGAIN ON JANUARY 26. I BELIEVE THAT IN A CASE AS TRAGIC, SENSITIVE AND COMPLEX AS THE SULLIVAN DISAPPEARANCE IT IS IMPORTANT FOR WE WHO ARE DIRECTLY CONCERNED TO GET TOGETHER, COMPARE NOTES, AND EXAMINE ANY REAL AND PERCEIVED PROBLEMS. I THINK THE MEETING WAS USEFUL, AND ALTHOUGH I KNOW IT SHED NO NEW LIGHT ON JOHN'S DISAPPERANCE, I HOPE IT WAS OF SOME BENEFIT TO YOU AND THE SULLIVAN FAMILY.

3. MOST OF THE ISSUES RAISED IN YOUR TWO LETTERS WERE, I BELIEVE, DISCUSSED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL AT THE MEETING. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL, HOWEVER, TO REITERATE MY UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE WE ARE AT PRESENT ON THE MAJOR ISSUES. AS YOU POINT OUT, THE SO-CALLED FIRST LETTER RECEIVED BY THE WASHINGTON POST IN OCTOBER WAS PURSUED BY THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT, BUT TO DATE IT HAS LED TO NOTHING OTHER THAN AN EXTORTION ATTEMPT. THIS DOES CAST SERIOUS DOUBT ON THE WRITER'S MOTIVE.

4. IT WAS THIS LETTER, AND THIS LETTER ONLY, THAT AMBASSADOR HINTON REFERRED TO IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESS IN SAN SALVADOR ON JANUARY 18. AS YOU SAW FROM THE TEXT OF HIS ACTUAL STATEMENTS THAT I GAVE YOU AT OUR MEETING, THE ENSUING PRESS REPORT THAT HE WAS REFERRING TO THE AUTHOR OR AUTHORS OF BOTH LETTERS WAS, AT A MINIMUM, A MISINTERPRETATION BY THE MEDIA.

5. THE SECOND LETTER WAS RECEIVED BY THE EMBASSY AT SAN SALVADOR ON DECEMBER [illegible], AND ITS CONTENTS RELAYED TO THE DEPARTMENT DECEMBER [illegible] BY TELEX. THAT SAME DAY, AN OFFICER FROM OUR CITIZENS EMERGENCY CENTER TELEPHONED THE SULLIVAN FAMILY TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE CONTENTS OF THAT MESSAGE. UNFORTUNATELY,

REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE MAR 1 3 1984
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE ____ REASON(S) ____
TS AUTH. ____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☐
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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THAT OFFICE WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY BROUGHT IN FOR THE OFFICER WHO HAS HAD PRIME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SULLIVAN CASE, DID NOT AT THE SAME TIME DIRECTLY ADVISE YOUR OFFICE. A COPY OF THE ACTUAL LETTER WAS RECEIVED THROUGH THE MAIL JANUARY 5, TRANSLATED, AND COPIES SENT TO THE SULLIVAN FAMILY AND YOUR OFFICE ON JANUARY 11. AGAIN, I APOLOGIZE THAT YOUR OFFICE WAS NOT CONTACTED WHEN WE INITIALLY RECEIVED THE POST'S REPORTING TELEGRAM.

6. AT THE MOMENT, THE FEW LEADS THE LETTER PROVIDED WHICH COULD BE CHECKED OUT BY OUR EMBASSY HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED. THE AREA MENTIONED IN THE LETTER AS THE PLACE WHERE JOHN SULLIVAN'S BODY WAS ALLEGEDLY DEPOSITED IS A LARGE LAVA FLOW, WHICH IS A KNOWN DUMPING GROUND FOR BODIES OF INDIVIDUALS KILLED IN THE VIOLENCE WHICH PRESENTLY ROCKS EL SALVADOR. THERE IS NO RECORD KEPT OF THE DISPOSITION OF SUCH BODIES.

7. AS YOU KNOW, JIM WARD RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO EL SALVADOR ON MY INSTRUCTIONS, SPECIFICALLY TO DISCUSS THE SULLIVAN CASE WITH THE EMBASSY. DURING HIS VISIT, HE AND CONSUL LANNON DROVE WITH AN ARMED GUARD TO THAT AREA. MR. WARD'S REPORT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THERE WOULD BE NO WAY TO IDENTIFY, TO VERIFY, OR ANY INDIVIDUAL'S BODY DUMPED AT THAT SITE ONCE A FEW DAYS HAD PASSED. ADDITIONALLY, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THIS LOCATION IS WELL KNOWN TO MOST PEOPLE IN EL SALVADOR. THE WRITING ON THE WALL MENTIONED IN THE LETTER IS SIMPLY NOT VERIFIABLE FOR THE REASONS WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH YOU AND THE FAMILY IN THE PAST.

8. AS I STATED IN OUR MEETING, ALTHOUGH I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND THE INCLINATION OF THE FAMILY TO ACCEPT THESE LETTERS AT FACE VALUE, SINCE THEY PURPORT TO OFFER SOME GLIMMER OF INFORMATION IN A CASE THAT HAS GONE ON FOR OVER A YEAR WITH NO NEW FACTS COMING TO LIGHT, I HOPE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT WE AND THE EMBASSY WOULD BE LESS THAN RESPONSIBLE NOT TO LOOK AT THESE LETTERS AND OTHER ALLEGED CLUES OBJECTIVELY. THIS INCLUDES, OF COURSE, ATTEMPTING TO VERIFY THE AUTHENTICITY OF THESE LETTERS AND THE INFORMATION THEY CONTAIN. AT THE MOMENT, WE ARE STILL AWAITING PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE HANDWRITING OF THE TWO LETTERS.

9. AS A RESULT OF THE FAMILY'S ADVERTISEMENTS, THE RECENT PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THE TWO LETTERS, AND OUR OWN EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA, WE CAN EXPECT MORE SUCH LETTERS TO APPEAR. ALL OF THEM, I ASSURE YOU, WILL RECEIVE THE ATTENTION THEY DESERVE.

10. RETURNING TO MY RECENT CONVERSATION WITH YOU, I MUST ADMIT THAT I WAS TAKEN ABACK BY YOUR OBSERVATION THAT THE SULLIVAN FAMILY BELIEVES THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS "COVERING UP" THE TRUE FACTS REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN SULLIVAN. AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE PERSONALLY BEEN VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THE EFFORT TO SOLVE JOHN'S DISAPPERANCE AND MY STAFF AND I HAVE WORKWK CLOSELY WITH THE EMBASSY TO ASSIST IN THIS INVESTIGAITON AND TO KEEP THE FAMILY INFORMED. IN ADDITION TO JIM WARD'S LATEST VISIT TO EL SALVADOR, THOUSANDS OF MANHOURS HAVE GONE INTO INVESTIGATING LEADS WHICH MIGHT HAVE YIELDED INFORMATION AS TO SULLIVAN'S FATE. BODIES HAVE BEEN

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11. YOU CAN BE CERTAIN THAT NEITHER I NOR THE EMBASSY IN EL SALVADOR HAVE SPARED ANY EFFORT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS CASE. NOR WOULD WE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BE PARTY TO ANY ATTEMPT TO COVER UP ANY INFORMATION REGARDING JOHN SULLIVAN'S APPEARANCE.

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12. IN CONCLUSION, LET ME AGAIN EMPHASIZE TO YOU AND TO THE SULLIVAN FAMILY OUR DEEP AND ABIDING CONCERN OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN SULLIVAN AND OUR CONTINUING DETERMINATION TO DO WHATEVER IS POSSIBLE TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THIS AMERICAN CITIZEN. I REGRET THAT WE HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN OUR EFFORTS TO DATE. I ASSURE YOU, HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT FROM A LACK OF CONCERN OR EFFORT ON OUR PART OR THE PART OF OUR EMBASSY IN SAN SALVADOR.

13. WITH BEST WISHES.

SINCERELY,

DIEGO C. ASENCIO

END TEXT. STOESSEL
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